SOUTH-EAST VIEW OF THE COLLEGIATE CHURCH, MANCHESTER.

This beautiful and venerable edifice of "olden time" assimilates very nearly, both in constitution and in the character of its architecture, to our cathedrals. Like those splendid erections of feudal days, this structure is characterized by the space of ground it occupies, by magnificence of design, and by luxuriance of decoration. Over this building, also, as over them, the mist of half-forgotten ages has gathered; and whilst we gaze through the hallowed veil upon the labours of a race of men long since returned to their dust, memory sheds her light upon the cloud, and invests the sacred pile with a gorgeous halo.

This edifice was founded by Thomas West, Lord de la Warre, rector of the parish in the year 1422; but though much of the building appears to have been raised during the life of this noble priest. It was enlarged in dimensions, and enriched in sculpture and carved decorations by Sir John Huntingdon, the first warden; Sir Ralph Langley, the third; and Sir James Stanley who succeeded the latter. Private chapels, oratories, and various other additions and alterations have progressively been made, and the whole constitutes a large pile of building. Its exterior dimensions are 232 feet in length from west to east, by 132 feet in breadth from north to south. These measurements include the tower and lateral chapels. The original edifice, commenced by Lord Warre and finished by Bishop Stanley, was doubtless an object of grandeur and beauty; for theirs was the era of architectural luxury. Then every part of a religious building was surcharged with ornament; and laboured masonry with elaborate sculpture and carving were displayed in vast and varied profusion. The Collegiate Church of Manchester was evidently of this style and character, but formed of bad materials, a soft, red, friable sand-stone, and exposed to a corrosive atmosphere, it now assumes a dingy battered appearance.

Amidst the confusion of the civil wars, and the barbarous efforts of puritanical zeal, the church remained uninjured. Several reasons have been assigned for this preservation, the most probable being that the leading men of Manchester and the neighbourhood were devoted to the interests of the Parliament.

Our limits will not permit an extended description of this magnificent structure, or an enumeration of the various chapels and other subordinate erections; a few general remarks will suffice to give it an interest to our readers, but an actual survey of the building must be taken, before an accurate idea of its peculiar features can be formed. The accompanying engravings will enable those who are familiar with the general structure of cathedrals to form a tolerably just conception of the character of the building.

The exterior of the church is conformable to the style of Gothic architecture, as it existed in the fifteenth century; and nearly all the subsequent alterations and additions have been executed with reference to the original design.

The view given above displays the south side and eastern end of the church, whereby it will be seen that there are twelve clerestory windows, a staircase turret near the centre, and that the windows are large, with several mullions, tracery, &c. The low building projecting from the eastern end is the Cheetham Chapel, the next projection, near the tomb, is the Chapter House; west of this is Hulme's Chapel, Jesus Chapel, Trafford Chapel, and Brown's chapel. At the west end is a lofty handsome tower, surmounted by crocketed pinnacles, and ornamented with four windows, tracery, &c., in its upper tier. The body of the church consists of a nave, used as the parish church, with two aisles and lateral chapels; east of these is the choir, having wooden stalls, richly carved, on the north, south, and western sides; the altar at the east end, and the whole surrounded by an aisle.

Diverging from this are the chapter-house and five chapels; four of these are private property, the one belonging to the Earl of Derby is an extensive building on the north side of the choir, partly erected by James Stanley, Bishop of Ely, and fourth warden, and finished after his death by his natural son, Sir John de Yarford, or Stanley. In a small chantry adjoining, dedicated to St. John the Baptist, stands the tomb of this prelate, composed of grey marble, upon which is inlaid a small brass effigy, habited in pontificals.

The chapels are now less interesting than they were formerly. They contain a few monuments, possessing, however, no great merit as specimens of sculpture. Some of the screens exhibit most exquisite workmanship.

The interior of this sacred edifice is very imposing. Between the nave and the choir rises a beautiful screen which formerly supported a magnificent organ. In the year 1829 this was very judiciously removed to the west gallery; the small or choir organ being left in its original situation.

The windows in the choir have many remains of the painted glass with which they were once ornamented. In some of them, very beautiful specimens of this long-neglected art are still visible. In the upper and smaller compartments are still to be found the heads of several hundred saints, popes, monks, and benefactors to the church. Some of these, when viewed through a good glass, from the interior, exhibit considerable merit as specimens of early portrait painting.

The following particulars relative to the windows are extracted from a MS. collection preserved in the College Library:—The windows were richly painted; the east window of the south aisle had Michael and his angels, the nine orders of angels fighting with the dragon and his angels. The east window of the north aisle had St. Austin and St. Ambrose, and the other windows represented some canonical or ecclesiastical story. In the middle stanchion of every window was the picture of the Virgin Mary, and at the uppermost end, there was a very rich window, whereon was described our Saviour's arraignment and crucifixion.

The choir, if those of cathedrals are excepted, is perhaps the finest, taken in all its parts, in the kingdom; and in some particulars few cathedrals excel it. The tabernacle-work is almost unrivalled in this Island.

The view from the communion steps, towards the body of the church, is truly magnificent. It is from this situation that the harmony of the design of the choir is most visible. The organs contribute to the grandeur of the view, as much as the stalls and the tabernacle-work above them do to the picturesque. For a more elaborate description, we must refer our readers to Aston's "Picture of Manchester."

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